

## Perfect for shopping and strolling: Indiana's Main Streets

By Sally Campbell Grout

Every town, big or small, has one: a street that leads you through the community and reveals its personality, its heart, and its history. The Indiana Main Street program encourages towns throughout the state to develop and revitalize downtown areas, and to make those areas inviting to businesses and visitors. Here are just a few of the Indiana communities embracing the idea, and welcoming you to visit their downtowns and their towns as a whole.

### **Right on the river.**

At first glance, Newburgh may seem like a mere extension of Evansville. But rest assured this riverfront community stands on its own merits. Historic Newburgh, Inc. (800-636-9489) offers walking tours, or you can stroll on your own to discover Newburgh's Civil War history, Riverfront Walkway, antique stores and specialty shops.

### **The rest of the story.**

Usually, the first thing you hear about Corydon is that it was the state's first capital city, a fact you can learn more about at the Corydon Capitol State Historic Site (812-738-4890). But what's often unsung is current-day Corydon's Downtown Historic District (888-738-2137). In it, you'll find more than 80 businesses on five blocks. Even if you don't shop, you're sure to be entertained. The Corydon Jamboree (812-738-1130) offers country and gospel music and family entertainment every Saturday night. If you time your visit right, you can catch a performance at the Hayswood Theatre (812-738-8075).

### **19<sup>th</sup> Century charm, 21<sup>st</sup> Century comfort.**

Ever watch a movie that takes place in "yesteryear" and fantasize about living back then—as long as you could bring your laptop and a Diet Coke? Fortunately, there's a place where you can visit the past and then relax in the air-conditioned comfort of a welcoming bed and breakfast. Stroll through downtown Madison (800-559-2956) to see 133 blocks that feature beautiful 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture, all on the National Register of Historic Places. Madison grew to be a thriving river port in a time before railroads. Miraculously, many of the buildings from that era still remain. Today, the downtown historic district offers shoppers more than 60 places to browse for antiques and other unique items.

### **See more of Seymour.**

When John Mellencamp sang "I was born in small town..." this is the place he was talking about: Seymour, Indiana. The Jackson County Visitor Center (888-524-1914) can point you to some of the town's top spots both

in and out of the downtown area. One place of note: Freeman Army Airfield Museum (888-524-1914), where mementos ranging from uniforms and photographs to parts of European airplanes are displayed. Freeman Army Airfield trained more than 4000 World War II twin-engine pilots, and in 1945, 500 members of the Tuskegee Airmen were stationed at Freeman Field. This famous all-black unit never lost a bomber to the enemy during World War II. Another Seymour spot to see: the Southern Indiana Center for the Arts (812-522-2278). The 1851 brick home displays works noted artists by such as Nancy Noel, Maureen O'Hara Pesta, and Richard Kingsley, and hosts the only permanent exhibit of John Mellencamp's paintings.

### **On the street and above it.**

Where can you find a "main street" does double duty? In Noblesville (Hamilton County Convention and Visitors Bureau, 800-776-8687). The area around the 1878 Courthouse and its square is particularly charming. Stroll among the shops; stop for a waffle cone or a fresh-brewed cup of coffee; and be sure to look up. Much of the space above these retail shops—rooms that had served such varied purposes as jail cells, warehouses, and even a church--has been refurbished and is now being utilized as apartments and office space.

### **Not to mention the cobblestones.**

Stroll down the street in Zionsville (317-873-3836) and you'll be hard pressed not to stop every few feet to poke your head into a one-of-a-kind store. You'll find antiques, gifts and collectibles, clothing, wine, chocolate, restaurants that invite you to linger—basically all the ingredients you need for a perfect girls' day out. But don't worry, guys. The Friendly Tavern (317-873-5772) waits at the corner with catfish, pork tenderloins, and two-fisted hamburgers.

### **They made the Coca-Cola look good.**

Can you imagine a Coke in anything but that trademark curvy bottle? Thank the folks in Western Indiana; the bottle was designed here in 1915, and you can see an original at the Vigo County Historical Museum (812-235-3717). The museum is just one of the interesting, unexpected attractions you'll find in Terre Haute (888-366-3043). Others include the Bleemel Building & The Terre Haute Brewery Co. & Tap Room & Museum (812-234-2800), a spot that started as a brewery in 1837 and now serves great lunches and dinners. The Swope Art Museum (812-238-1676) features works by American sculptors and painters such as Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, Edward Hopper, and T.C. Steele.

### **Lots of memories in one place.**

With so many antique stores and several museums, Crawfordsville (800-866-3973) is a great place to remember days gone by. Historic Downtown

puts antique malls and plenty of other stores within walking distance of each other. For a more studied look at a bygone time, visit the Lane Place Antebellum Mansion (765-362-3416), the renovated home of Henry S. Lane, founder of the Indiana Republican Party. The Ben-Hur Museum (765-362-5769) houses memorabilia of Civil War general and “Ben-Hur” author Lew Wallace. And the Old Jail Museum (765-362-5222), built in 1882, is where you’ll find the only operating rotary cellblock in the country.

#### **A little bit of Switzerland.**

When you combine Hoosier hospitality and Swiss hospitality, you get one friendly place: Berne (260-589-8080). The town itself is a picturesque place, populated by Hoosiers with a Swiss heritage that dates back 150 years. You’ll find an Amish community here, along with one of the largest Mennonite churches in the United States. The Swiss Heritage Village and Museum (260-589-8007) features 12 restored buildings that date from 1850-1900. At Amishville USA (260-589-3536), you can enjoy a working grist mill, buggy rides, a tour of an authentic Amish house, and the incredible Essen Platz Restaurant, where Swiss and Amish recipes are served and the Country Harvest Buffet challenges your waistband.

#### **A place to unwind.**

It’s only fitting that a place with a peaceful name like Farmland (765-468-6701) would be an ideal place to relax. Stroll through Farmland’s National Register Historic District to see architecture from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, slate-patterned sidewalks, railroad-style street lights, shops, and restaurants.

#### **You’ll be glad to park someplace else.**

It’s hard to believe, but for a brief time in the early 1970s, some town leaders wanted to level the courthouse in Crown Point (Lake County Convention and Visitors Bureau, 800-255-5253) to make room for a parking lot. Concerned citizens stopped them and the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. Though no longer the site where government business takes place, the courthouse, built in 1878, still serves the community well with a restaurant, historical museum, shops, summer theatre, an ice cream parlor, and plenty of great stories. (Here are a couple to whet your appetite: John Dillinger was incarcerated here and escaped; you can visit the cell where he stayed. Rudolph Valentino married here, as did President Regan and his first wife Jane Wyman.) Other historic buildings in Crown Point are being preserved, restored, and refurbished, confirming the community’s commitment to preserving its incredible architecture and its rich heritage.

#### **How lovely is LaPorte?**

The town of LaPorte, located in, appropriately enough, LaPorte County (800-685-7174), has been called “The Maple City” and “The City of Lakes” because of its six lakes and the trees that surround them. However, LaPorte seems to be in need of a nickname to reference its wonderful architecture. Some buildings date back to the late 1800s and early 1900s, with styles that include Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Richardsonian Romanesque. But perhaps one of its most striking buildings is simply a circle. The Door Prairie Barn, built in 1878 and recently placed on the National Register of Historic Places, is one of the few remaining “round barns” in the country.

**More on Main.**

To learn more about Indiana’s Main Streets and downtown districts, visit [enjoyindiana.com](http://enjoyindiana.com).